



20 TIPS for Exercising

- 1 SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE.** Check with your health care provider before beginning a new fitness program, especially if you are over 40, smoke, have a health condition, or a family history of cardiovascular disease.
- 2 SET S.M.A.R.T. GOALS.** A successful exercise program includes specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely goals. Determine how often, how long, when, and where each activity will be performed.
- 3 START SLOWLY.** Gradual increases in intensity, frequency and/or duration of an activity over a period of time can help you ease into your new exercise routine and prevent injuries.
- 4 CREATE A BALANCED PLAN.** A balanced fitness plan includes a warm-up and cool-down, aerobic activity, strength training, and stretching. Each element provides different benefits, and when combined, help you achieve the maximum benefits for your body.
- 5 SCHEDULE EXERCISE.** Make exercise an important part of your day by scheduling it on your calendar and treating it like you would any other appointment.
- 6 HAVE A BACKUP PLAN.** Decide in advance how you will handle situations that could result in excuses for not exercising. If it's raining, walk around an indoor mall or use an exercise video or DVD.
- 7 KEEP TRACK.** Record your progress to give you a visual reminder of your improvements. This can also help you feel a sense of accomplishment.
- 8 EAT FOR ENERGY.** Eat a light, healthy snack containing protein and a fruit or vegetable one to two hours before your workout for energy and stamina. Good choices include a handful of almonds and an apple or low-fat yogurt with fresh fruit or vegetable slices.
- 9 DRESS FOR EXERCISE.** Exercise clothing should be comfortable and allow freedom of movement. Always wear shoes that fit properly and are suitable for your activity.
- 10 WARM-UP.** Raise your body temperature gradually by walking, marching in place or jogging slowly. Warming up increases flexibility and decreases the risk of injury.
- 11 STRETCH.** Improve your flexibility and range of motion by stretching daily, even when you aren't exercising. Stretching can also help you relax.
- 12 MONITOR YOUR HEART RATE.** Check your pulse or wear a heart rate monitor when you exercise. Adjust your intensity level to stay within your target heart rate zone.
- 13 COOL-DOWN.** Slowly reduce your intensity level until your heart rate and breathing are at a normal, comfortable level. Always end your workouts with some stretching to release muscle tension and prevent soreness.
- 14 REWARD YOURSELF.** When you reach a goal, reward yourself with something special to recognize your accomplishment and keep you motivated.
- 15 TRY MINI-WORKOUTS.** The Surgeon General recommends 30 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week. Breaking it up into three 10-minute sessions can make it easier to fit into your day.
- 16 EXERCISE TOGETHER.** Exercise with a friend or family member to help you stay committed. Include your children to help them develop habits that can lead to a lifetime of healthy living.
- 17 INCLUDE VARIETY.** Keep exercise fun by trying new activities like dance, karate, Pilates, or yoga.
- 18 STOP SPOT REDUCING.** It's not possible to target one area of your body for weight loss. Regular aerobic exercise combined with strength-training and healthy eating can reduce overall body fat and increase lean muscle, helping you reshape your entire body.
- 19 STAY HYDRATED.** Drink plenty of water before, during and after exercise to prevent cramping or a heat-related illness.
- 20 BE PATIENT.** It may take some time to see results or feel as though your hard work is paying off. Stick to your plan and remind yourself of your goals if you get off track or discouraged. Remember that any activity is better than none at all.



Sources: American College of Sports Medicine, American Council on Exercise, American Heart Association, Department of Health and Human Services, and Mayo Clinic



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